



Prepare Now for Hurricane Season

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30, with the peak activity during September through November. Effective planning is the key to maintaining your organization's operations and being able to provide for your community. Public-sector leaders play a dual role in helping both their employees and their agency as a whole, to be prepared to respond in the community. This Bulletin concentrates on preparing your employees, facilities, and operations so you can continue to serve your community before, during and immediately after a hurricane.

One of the most effective ways to share information about personal and organizational preparedness is to talk to your staff. Add preparedness discussions to the agenda of your staff meetings ahead of the storm season. Consider the discussion points provided in FEMA's booklet, *Prepare your Organization for a Hurricane Playbook*.

https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1409933369110-5d82e4e75ba272f6cefd656ff190c422/prepareathon_playbook_hurricane_final_090414_508.pdf

- Share the potential impact of hurricanes – New Jersey has recently had to deal with a series of hurricanes and a superstorm and we have learned a lot. But as the years pass, those with the experience and firsthand knowledge are leaving. It is important to share the lessons learned with newer leaders in the organization. Even more effective is to write them down. These notes become the genesis of a response and recovery plan that is tailored to your community.
- Review with your employees the National Weather Service terms; Advisory, Watch and Warning. Relate them in terms of timelines, severity of storms and your agency's preparation plans.
- Outline your organization's emergency communication plan. Routine lines of authority and communication often need to be modified during emergencies as people and electronic communication modes become unavailable. Lines of authority and communication can further change when an official state of emergency is declared. Review routine, emergency, and back-up plans for communications now.
 - Inventory routine, emergency and back-up equipment. Evaluate on-hand inventory against your needs assessment.
 - Test emergency and back-up equipment. Ensure they are in operational readiness.
 - Verify contact information of all responders. Distribute updated information to stakeholders.
- Review your organization's preparation, response, and recovery procedures with elected officials and department leaders. Consensus, cooperation, and coordination between leaders are needed for effective preparation, response, and recovery operations. Get them now. Focus on priorities and capabilities.
 - Distribute any written plans and discuss past operations' successes and challenges
 - Adjust plans and procedures according to lessons-learned and changes in your community
 - Encourage department leaders to continue the discussions with their supervisors and employees. Readiness starts with the employee. If he or she has not made preparations for their families and homes, they cannot be ready to serve their community. Consider distributing the Red Cross's Family Disaster Plan fillable form to assist with their planning.
http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m12140360_ARC_Family_Disaster_Plan_Template_r083012.pdf
- After the storm, before sending crews out, hold a Shift Briefing on the hazards of response operations.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.

Post-Storm Safety Action Plan

After a significant hurricane or storm, recovery and clean-up operations can expose responders to several hazards that are different than normal operations.

- Carbon monoxide poisoning – Emergency generators, gas-powered pressure washers and pumps that are used extensively during recovery operations produce carbon monoxide (CO) as a byproduct. CO is an odorless, colorless, gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. To minimize the potential for CO poisoning follow these safety tips:
 - Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open. Gasoline-powered equipment should be at least 20 feet from open windows, doors or ventilation equipment.
 - Be alert for signs and symptoms of CO poisoning. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Call 9-1-1 if overexposure is suspected.

For more information and resources visit <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.html>

- Downed power lines – **Workers should treat all power lines as “hot”** unless the lines have been de-energized, grounded, and tested by a qualified electrician. During power outages, many people use portable electrical generators. If the portable generator is improperly sized, installed, or operated, it can send power back to the electrical lines. This problem is called backfeed. Backfeed can seriously injure or kill repair workers.
- Chain Saw Injuries – Operating chain saws during and immediately after a storm presents additional hazards than routine operations. Severe time constraints, wires, traffic, and working in downpours or flood waters complicate the operations, even by experienced chain saw operators. Remind workers of the following:
 - Chainsaw operators on the ground must wear leg chaps of ballistic nylon or Kevlar. The Safety Director recommends the best practice of having at least one pair of chaps for each chainsaw the agency owns. Ensure the workers are wearing properly sized chaps, gloves, face / eye, and hearing protection.
 - As a routine, all agency chainsaws should be maintained before the storm. Properly sharpen chain saw teeth and properly lubricate the blade with bar and chain oil. Additionally, remind workers to periodically check and adjust the blade to keep the correct tension on the chain to keep it from coming off the blade, and ensure good cutting action.
 - Check around the tree for hazards such as nails, power lines, and cables. Take extra care in cutting “spring poles” trees or branches that have been bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object during a high wind.

For more information and resources visit <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/chainsaws.html>

- Over-exposure to mold – Buildings wet for longer than 48 hours will generally support visible mold growth and excessive exposure to mold-contaminated materials can cause adverse health effects in susceptible persons regardless of the type of mold or the extent of contamination. For the majority of persons, undisturbed mold is not a substantial health hazard. Mold is a greater hazard for persons with mold allergies. To prevent exposure that could result in adverse health effects from disturbed mold, persons should 1) avoid areas where mold contamination is obvious; 2) use environmental controls; 3) use personal protective equipment; and 4) keep hands, skin, and clothing clean and free from mold-contaminated dust.

Visit the CDC website for more information and resources <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/workers.html>